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ABSTRACT

The principal justification for granting faculty members academic tenure has historically been associated with the idea of academic freedom and economic security. However, tenure at the same time may also tend to perpetuate mediocrity and incompetence within a college community if faculty members are not carefully scrutinized prior to granting them tenure. Students, because of their close association with faculty, should definitely be included in the evaluation of teacher competence. Thus, it is recommended that the University of Utah create a Student Advisory Committee comprised of upperclassmen and graduate students in each department to make recommendations regarding curriculum or other departmental changes, and evaluations of all teachers being considered for retention or tenure. It is also recommended that 3 qualified students be granted membership on the University Tenure Advisory Committee. Their role would be to ensure that student concerns and opinion are considered by the committee in reaching their decisions. (HS)

University of Utah
Faculty Council
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STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN TENURE DECISIONS

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The principle justification for granting faculty members academic tenure has historically been associated with the idea of academic freedom and economic security. In short it enables a faculty member to act, study, teach and publish free from a large number of restraints and pressures which could in a given situation inhibit his purpose and effectiveness. It has long been recognized that tenure can advance scholarship and insure academic freedom but at the same time it can become an instrument to perpetuate incompetence and mediocrity within the university community. It is for this reason that the granting of tenure must be done only after serious consideration of all pertinent data accumulated during the probationary period regarding teaching, scholarship, and devotion to the university. Naturally the impact of this decision extends not only to the faculty where the decision is made but also to the surrounding community and especially to the students he teaches and with whom he associates. It is because of this far-reaching impact on students and the concern for their own education that these proposals are being submitted for faculty approval.

In an effort to comply with the AAUP and AAC statements on tenure and retention, a careful search was undertaken in an effort to determine their policy on student participation in such decisions. Although no direct mention was made of this proposal the following statements were of interest to the student position. In the 1964 Statement on the Academic Freedom of Students they write:

"As constituents of the academic community, students should be free, individually and collectively, to express their views on issues of institutional policy ---. The student body should have clearly defined means to participate in the formulation and application of regulations affecting student affairs."

From the 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities they make the following comments on "Student Status:"

"When students in American colleges and universities desire to participate responsibly in the government of the institution they attend, their wish should be recognized as a claim to opportunity both for educational experience and for involvement in the affairs of their college or university. Ways should be found to permit significant student participation within the limits of attainable effectiveness."

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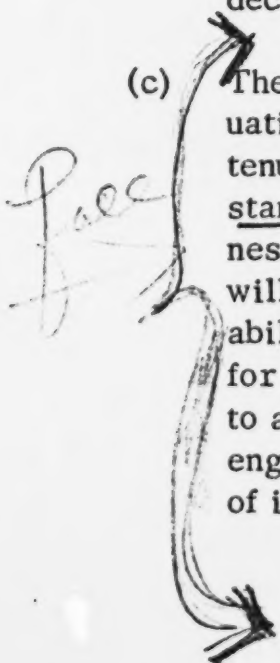
In no written statement by these organizations were there recommendations that students should be excluded from participation in the affairs of academic freedom or tenure.

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It is the opinion of this report that teaching should be of central importance in the decision to retain or grant tenure to faculty members. Inasmuch as students reap directly the effects of good or poor teaching and are also in the most advantageous position to evaluate the quality of a professor's classroom presentation, student opinion should be prominently considered along with other information upon which tenure and retention decisions are based.

In order to facilitate the smooth exchange of such data the following proposal is made for Faculty Council approval:

- (1) It is proposed that a Student Advisory Committee be selected from upperclassmen and graduate students in each department.
 - (a) This committee should consist of four responsible students to be selected by the department chairman. In subsequent years the previous committee and the department chairman should jointly select the new committee. The said committee shall consist of at least one senior and one graduate student in addition to two other qualified students of the department chairman's choosing. In all cases these students should be familiar with the staff, policies and courses of the department they represent.
 - (b) Throughout the year this committee will convene at the request of the department chairman to give student opinion on curriculum changes, or other departmental changes and decisions that concern students.
 - (c) The committee shall also convene to prepare a written evaluation of all teachers being considered for retention or tenure by that department. This report, prepared on a standard form, will give student opinion as to the effectiveness of that teacher in the classroom. The teacher's willingness to meet with and help students as well as his ability to stimulate critical thinking will be among the criteria for judgment. The student committee shall also have access to all publications, committee assignments, speaking engagements and other data of a non-personal nature which is of importance in reaching such a decision.
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- (d) This report will be submitted to the department chairman who will present the student evaluation to the other faculty members before the decision to retain or grant tenure to the teacher in question.
 - (e) This student report must be included with the letters of recommendation, publications, etc. forwarded to the dean's office. Failure to do so except in cases where students have been negligent in submitting the report will necessitate a reevaluation by the faculty.
 - (f) It is hoped that the department chairman will not view this as an unnecessary burden but as a means for obtaining valuable information that can not be obtained effectively in any other way.
- (2) It is also proposed that three qualified students, who are experienced in working with faculty, be granted membership on the University Tenure Advisory Committee. These three students would include the student body president (or his assistant), the Student-Faculty Board chairman, and a responsible graduate student to be chosen by the Tenure Committee. Their role would be to insure that student concerns and opinion were considered by the committee in reaching their decision.

The preceding proposals, if adopted, would constitute a pioneering step in granting to responsible students the opportunity to be a part of the decision-making process. For this reason it is suggested that the proposals be initiated for an experimental period of three years, during which time the system could be evaluated and modified yearly in accordance with the results obtained and problems confronted. At the end of this three-year probationary period, the entire philosophy should be reviewed in light of the progress made in better student-faculty relations and to what extent the initial goals were met. It is hoped that favorable results at that time will induce faculty and administration to allow the students a permanent voice in the institution they represent and in the educational process. These are the motivating goals for which the preceding proposals have been submitted for faculty approval.

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